

St. Catherine Creek

National Wildlife Refuge

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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1990.
- Acres: 24,445, with a potential size of 34,256 acres.
- Other management: conservation easements - seven in five counties, totaling 3,935 acres; fee title tracts - two in three counties, totaling 460 acres.
- Refuge located in the western section of Adams County in southwest Mississippi, seven miles south of Natchez, Mississippi. The western boundary of the refuge is the Mississippi River with the eastern boundary following the bluffs and the southern boundary, the Homochitto River.

Natural History

- Habitat within St. Catherine Creek NWR offers a myriad of ecological niches for wildlife.
- Cypress swamps and hardwood forests teeming with oak, gum, elm, ash and cottonwood comprise 30 percent of the refuge.
- Ten percent of the acreage is open water, while the remaining area consists of cleared land and land created due to the meandering of the Mississippi River.
- Rains and backwater flooding fill depressions and basins in low areas creating optimum wintering ground for waterfowl. Natural water bodies and a multitude of beaver ponds create ideal habitat for wading birds, shore birds, and summer nesting wood ducks.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Six-person staff.
- 33,000 visitors annually.
- Current budget (FY 02) \$412,000.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide and maintain optimum habitat for migratory waterfowl consistent with the overall objectives of the Mississippi Flyway.
- Provide habitat and protection for endangered and threatened species including the peregrine falcon, bald eagle, big-eared bat and the alligator.
- Provide habitat for natural diversity of wildlife and plant species.
- Provide opportunities for wildlife-oriented recreation and environmental education when compatible with other refuge objectives.

Management Tools

- Water management for waterfowl, wood storks and wading bird rookeries.
- Cooperative farming.
- Prescribed fire.
- Mechanical/chemical control of noxious plants.
- Deer management with public hunting.
- Education/interpretation.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships.

Public Use Opportunities

- Trails.
- Fishing.
- Wildlife observation.
- Photography.
- Hunting.
- Auto tour route (under construction).

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Calendar of Events

February: squirrel, rabbit and raccoon hunting.

March: Watchable Wildlife Program, fishing opens.

April: Lottery youth turkey hunt.

May: Migratory Bird Day.

August: Natchez Birding Festival.

October: National Wildlife Refuge Week.

October-November: archery deer hunting, squirrel and rabbit hunting.

November-January: primitive weapon and archery deer hunting.

November: youth gun hunt for deer.

December-January: waterfowl hunting.

Questions and Answers

Do you have hunting programs available to the public?

Yes, our hunting season begins in October of each year with archery deer hunting. It is followed by primitive deer hunting. We have a small game hunt for squirrel and rabbit (steel shot only) and waterfowl hunting on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays until noon that coincides with the state seasons (steel shot only). We also have a lottery turkey hunt for youth hunters age 10-15 in the spring of each year.

Do you allow fishing on St. Catherine Creek NWR?

Yes, our fishing season opens each year on March 1 and ends on October 31. We allow fishing on several bodies of water located on the refuge, including Butler Lake, Salt Lake, Gilliard Lake, The Swamp, and the River Road Unit.

Do you have any special activities for persons with disabilities?

Yes, we have a special hunting season for wheelchair-dependent hunters during the months of November and December. Persons must pre-register to reserve a hunting blind for specific dates. This hunt has been well received with the use numbers increasing each year.

Do you allow school groups and birders to tour the refuge?

Yes, we have an annual birding tour during the month of August that is hosted by the Jackson Audubon Society. We also welcome school groups and boy scout and girl scout troops to tour the refuge and take special advantage of our nature trail. Refuge personnel make arrangements and set up auto or hiking tours.

Do you hire youth during the off season to work on the refuge?

This refuge has participated in the eight-week Youth Conservation Corps Program. Three to four high school students between the ages of 15-18 are randomly chosen from the local private and public high school systems to participate in this program. Enrollees complete an assortment of projects ranging from painting, boundary marking, yard maintenance and sign maintenance. Field trips are planned to show them what wildlife habitat management is all about.